

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 038095

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SE, UK, XO, PFOR, MP

SUBJECT: SEYCHELLES' REQUEST FOR RETURN OF THREE BIOT
ISLANDS

REF: (A) NAIROBI 0152; (B) PORT LOUIS 0016; (C) NAIROBI
0540; (D) PORT LOUIS 0053

1. AFTER GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO ALL ASPECTS OF
PROBLEM, DEPARTMENT AND DOD DO NOT SUPPORT RETURN OF
ALDABRA, FARQUHAR AND ILE DESROCHES TO SEYCHELLES UPON
INDEPENDENCE FOR FOLLOWING REASONS:

A) THE RETURN OF THE ISLANDS WOULD SET A PRECEDENT THAT
COULD BE USED BY MAURITIUS TO PRESS FOR THE RETURN OF DIEGO
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GARCIA.

B) IN 1965 SEYCHELLOIS ACCEPTED CONSTRUCTION OF MAHE AIR-PORT AS COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF ISLANDS. (THE U.S. FINANCED ONE HALF THE COST OF DETACHING THE BIOT ISLANDS FROM THE SEYCHELLES AND MAURITIUS WITH THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF ASSURING THEIR CONTINUED AVAILABILITY.)

C) WHILE THERE IS NOTHING PLANNED AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE ISLANDS DO HAVE POTENTIAL FOR MILITARY USE. IN 1967 A JOINT US/UK AIRFIELD ON ALDABRA WAS AGREED UPON, BUT

PLANS HAD TO BE DROPPED FOR ECONOMIC AS WELL AS ECOLOGICAL REASONS. IN 1969 A USAF SURVEY TEAM DECIDED THAT AN AIR-FIELD COULD BE BUILT ON FARQUHAR ISLAND ALTHOUGH AT GREATER COST THAN ON ALDABRA.

DEPARTMENT AND DOD THUS CONCLUDE THAT DISADVANTAGES OF RETURN OF ISLANDS OUTWEIGH ANY GOODWILL WHICH MIGHT BE GENERATED IN SEYCHELLES BY THEIR RETURN.

2. DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES CONVEYED ABOVE POSITION TO BRITISH (FCO ASSISTANT SECRETARY THOMSON) AT RECENT US-UK TALKS HELD IN DEPARTMENT. THOMSON CLEARLY INDICATED THAT HMG HAD NOT YET TAKEN A POSITION ON RETURN OF THE ISLANDS. IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING, HOWEVER, THAT MANCHAM WOULD BE JOINING RENE IN PRESSING FOR RETURN OF ISLANDS AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION SCHEDULED TO BEGIN MARCH 14. THOMSON MADE POINT, WITHOUT ELABORATING, THAT HE EXPECTED THIS DEMAND TO DIRECTLY AFFECT THE OUTCOME OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

3. FOR NAIROBI: REQUEST YOU NOT RPT NOT INFORM MANCHAM OF OUR POSITION AT THIS TIME.

4. FOR LONDON: REQUEST YOU ASK FCO IF IT HAS YET DEVELOPED DEFINITIVE POSITION ON SEYCHELLOIS REQUEST. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

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